

Financial Hardship – Collection of Rates and Service Charges

Responsible Directorate:	Corporate Strategy & Performance
Responsible Service Unit:	Finance
Contact Person:	Manager Finance
Date of Approval:	12 June 2023
Council Resolution No:	CS03-06/23

1. POLICY STATEMENT

The purpose of this policy is to allow flexibility for payment of overdue Rates and Service Charges for ratepayers who are experiencing severe financial distress.

2. OBJECTIVE AND PURPOSE

The City recognises its responsibility in responding to the needs of ratepayers experiencing severe financial hardship. This policy establishes clear guidelines ensuring that they are treated with respect, dignity, fairness, equity and confidentiality.

3. KEY DEFINITIONS

Nil

4. SCOPE

This policy applies to all City of Wanneroo ratepayers in financial distress.

5. IMPLICATIONS

This Policy aligns with the *Strategic Community Plan 2021-2031*, as follows:

7.5 *Customer focused information and services.*

Consideration is to be given to the following for all requests for financial hardship relief:

- Financial Implications to be considered with each case;
- Section 6.51 of the *Local Government Act 1995*;
- Section 6.12 of the *Local Government Act. 1995*;
- Section 6.47 of the *Local Government Act 1995*;
- Delegation 1.1.23 – Defer, Grant Discounts, Waive or Write Off Debts
- Delegation 1.1.25 Agreement as to Payment of Rates and Service Charges; and
- Delegation 1.1.28 - Financial Hardship – Agreement as to Payment and Grant of a Concession on Council Rates and Service Charges

6. IMPLEMENTATION

The CEO will:-

- determine the level of relief ratepayers may receive based on evidence of genuine financial hardship due to trauma/tragedy, level of income, reliance on social security, illness/disability, business failure or other factors considered relevant;
- determine the periodical debt repayment amount an applicant may pay to the City to reduce the outstanding debt;
- consider, if satisfied that the contribution will exacerbate the level of financial hardship, grant a concession to all or part of the late payment interest incurred (excluding the late payment interest applicable to the Emergency Services Levy), to a maximum amount of \$400.00;
- in the case of severe financial hardship, as determined by the CEO or his nominee, not impose additional charges or interest (excluding the late payment interest applicable to the Emergency Services Levy);
- determine alternative payment plan options based on individual circumstances, subject to the arrangements agreed to being on the basis that the total debt outstanding will be extinguished within 3 years from the date of the arrangement.

7. AUTHORITIES AND ACCOUNTABILITIES

The CEO is delegated by Council to determine an alternative payment agreement with a person for the payment of rates or service charges (s.6.49) subject to conditions adopted by Council.

8. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The implementation of this Financial Hardship – Collection of Rates and Services Charges Policy is the responsibility of Finance.

9. DISPUTE RESOLUTION (if applicable)

All disputes in regard to this policy will be referred to the Director Corporate Strategy & Performance in the first instance. In the event that an agreement cannot be reached, the matter will be submitted to the CEO for a ruling.

10. EVALUATION AND REVIEW

This Financial Hardship – Collection of Rates and Service Charges Policy will be reviewed every five years or as required in the event of legislative changes. Where, as a result of an amendment to legislation the CEO may initiate such variations as deemed necessary subject to the submission of a report to the Council advising of the changes implemented to the next Ordinary Council meeting.

11. RELATED DOCUMENTS

This policy is supported by the following policies and/or delegations:

- Delegation to the CEO to determine alternative payment options.

12. REFERENCES

Local Government Act 1995.

Ombudsman Western Australia - Local Government collection of overdue Rates for People in situations of vulnerability: Good Practice Guidelines.

13. RESPONSIBILITY FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Manager Finance

REVISION HISTORY

Version	Next Review	Record No.
V1	April 2024	19/143532
V2	April 2023	19/143532[v2]
V3	April 2028	